

Report – Policy and Resources Committee

Electronic Voting for Divisions (Standing Order No. 14 Revision)

To be presented on Thursday, 22nd July 2023

*To the Right Honourable The Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Commons
of the City of London in Common Council assembled.*

SUMMARY

At its meeting on 9 March 2022, the Court of Common Council approved, in-principle, a proposal to introduce a method of electronic voting, using handheld devices, for the purposes of Divisions (i.e., recorded votes) taken at meetings of the Court in accordance with Standing Order No.14. This proposal had itself arisen from a resolution passed by the Court in December 2022, instructing the Policy & Resources Committee to investigate the viability of introducing such a mechanism.

The adoption of this process was to be subject to the satisfactory completion of testing. This has now been undertaken with positive feedback received. An alteration to Standing Orders No.14 is, therefore, now proposed to allow for electronic voting devices to be used for Divisions at Court of Common Council meetings, effective July 2023 onwards.

RECOMMENDATION

The Court of Common Council is **recommended** to approve the proposed amendment to Standing Order No.14, as set out at Appendix 1, to provide for electronic voting in respect of Divisions at meetings of the Court of Common Council.

MAIN REPORT

Background

1. At its meeting on 8 December 2022, the Court of Common Council resolved to instruct the Policy and Resources Committee to investigate the viability of introducing an electronic voting system, capable of recording individual votes, that would replace the current voting procedure as laid out in paragraph 4 of Standing Order No.14.
2. Subsequently, at its meeting on 23 February 2023, your Policy and Resources Committee considered a series of options, including fixed units, a software only solution and a portable hardware solution.
3. Upon review, the Committee agreed to support proposals for a portable hardware solution. These systems are comprised of portable electronic devices (clickers) for making votes, and software that needs installing on one device to collate and display these votes.

4. The aforementioned Policy and Resources Committee meeting of 23 February 2023 further agreed that, subject to the Court's approval, amendments to the Standing Orders should be sought at a later date to allow for the use of electronic voting devices for Divisions.
5. A recommendation to the Court was, therefore, submitted and on 9 March 2023, this Honourable Court approved the Committee's proposals in this respect, resolving to instruct officers to purchase an electronic voting system, offer training to Members for this system, and to bring a further report to change the Court's Standing Orders so that the system could be used for voting purposes in respect of Divisions.

Current Position and Proposal

6. Following this Honourable Court's agreement, the identified voting system, the Meridia electronic voting system, was purchased. The particular benefits of this system were articulated in the report presented previously to this Honourable Court.
7. Subsequent to the system's purchase, seven training / testing sessions were organised for Members to familiarise themselves with the system. The feedback from the Members who attended these sessions was overwhelmingly positive.
8. This Honourable Court is, therefore, asked to amend its Standing Orders, in accordance with the terms set out in the report previously agreed on 9 March 2023, to allow for an electronic voting system to be used for Divisions at Court meetings. These amendments are presented to the Court, as agreed by your Policy and Resources Committee on the 23 February 2023, set out with changes marked up, in Appendix 1.
9. The revised Standing Order proposals will retain the existing non-electronic Divisions mechanism, which can be used in the event that the e-voting system is for any reason not functioning. The revised Standing Order will also provide for Members the ability to contest the vote recorded in their name.

Conclusion

10. Having previously agreed to the introduction of electronic voting for Divisions, the procurement and satisfactory testing of suitable equipment has now been undertaken and its implementation, with commensurate changes to the Standing Orders to facilitate this, is recommended.

All of which we submit to the judgement of this Honourable Court.

DATED this 12th day of June 2023.

SIGNED on behalf of the Committee.

Deputy Christopher Hayward
Chairman, Policy and Resources Committee